

Christopher Columbus

(1451-1506)



FORTY FACTS

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COLUMBUS

Behind him lay the gray Azores,
Behind the Gates of Hercules;
Before him not the ghost of shores,
Before him only shoreless seas.
The good mate said: "Now must we pray,
For lo! The very stars are gone.
Brave Admiral, speak, what shall I say?"
"Why, say, 'Sail on! sail on! and on!'"

"My men grow mutinous day by day;
My men grow ghastly wan and weak."
The stout mate thought of home; a spray
Of salt wave washed his cheek.
"What shall I say, brave Admiral, say,
If we sight naught but seas at dawn?"
"Why, you shall say at break of day,
'Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!'"

They sailed and sailed, as winds might blow,
Until at last the blanched mate said:
"Why, now not even God would know
should I and all my men fall dead.
These very winds forget their way,
For God from these dread seas is gone.
Now speak, brave Admiral, speak and say" —
He said: "Sail on! sail on! and on!"

They sailed. They sailed. Then spake the mate:
"This mad sea shows his teeth to-night.
He curls his lip, he lies in wait,
With lifted teeth, as if to bite!
Brave Admiral, say but one good word:
What shall we do when hope is gone?"
The words leaped like a leaping sword:
"Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!"

Then, pale and worn, he kept his deck,
And peered through darkness. Ah, that night
Of all dark nights! And then a speck —
A light! a light! a light! a light!
It grew, a starlit flag unfurled!
It grew to be Time's burst of dawn.
He gained a world; he gave that world
Its grandest lesson: "On! sail on!"

Joaquin Miller

PREFACE

The year 1992 celebrates the Quincentennial Anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of America.

For 499 years Columbus has been acclaimed as the discoverer of America, one of the world's greatest mariners, and a man of intrepid faith and fearless courage.

Samuel Eliot Morison, one of America's most distinguished historians, described Columbus as follows:

He had... the qualities that made him great — his indomitable will, his superb faith in God and his own mission as the Christ-bearer to the lands beyond the seas, his stubborn persistence despite neglect, poverty, and discouragement. But there was no flaw, no dark side for his most outstanding and essential of all his qualities — his seamanship. As a master mariner and navigator, Columbus was supreme in his generation. Never was a title more justly bestowed than Admiral of the Ocean Sea (Christopher Columbus, Mariner, p. 148).

However, in our vaunted century, a century that prides itself for "learning," small factions have arisen who would calumniate Columbus, as they have our other heroes, would falsify history, and foist their misinformation upon our youth and people.

In philosophy we say, "**Contra factum, argumentum non validum est**" — that is, "Against a fact, no argument is valid." So this booklet is meant to present the facts and dispel the misinformation and vicious calumnies about Columbus in order to inform the uninformed and those who claim to be informed.

The information contained in this booklet should be invaluable as a supplement to the social studies, history, and foreign language curricula in the schools throughout United States.

The Authors



1. When and where was Columbus born?

Columbus was born in Genoa, a most important seaport town in northern Italy, in the late summer or early fall of 1451. His father and mother were Domenico Colombo and Susanna Fontanarossa, both ardent Catholics. They had their son baptized Cristoforo (which means the Christ-bearer) in the church of St. Stephen in Genoa. Archival documents exist in this same church, showing that Columbus was baptized a Roman Catholic.

2. Why was the year of Columbus' birth (A.D. 1451) such a critical period for Christianity?

Columbus' birth coincided with the fall of Constantinople to the Moslems in 1453. This was a catastrophe because the Moslems cut off the trade routes to the East. European traders could no longer go eastward in the steps of Marco Polo.

Also, the fall of Constantinople led to the fall of Jerusalem so that all the holy places were in the hands of the Moslems.

3. What effect did this crisis have on Columbus?

The fall of Constantinople had a tremendous impact on Columbus as a young man. First of all, European explorers began looking for a westward route to the Indies, and Columbus was one among them.

Furthermore, because access to Jerusalem and the holy places had been cut off, Columbus felt he was chosen by God to use the fruits of his enterprise to liberate the holy places where Jesus walked.

He strongly believed that his baptismal name, Christopher, the Christ-bearer, was no accident, that it foretold his vocation in life: namely, to be a Christ-bearer, one chosen to bring the word of God to a new world.

The name Colombo in Italian means "dove" — to bring the gospel of peace.¹

4. When did Columbus start out to fulfill his dream?

As a young boy Columbus often sat on the bay of Genoa, watching the tall sailing ships pass by — always dreaming the possible dream of one day sailing one of those ships. His father had other plans. He was a weaver, and he expected Columbus to follow in his footsteps. Columbus, therefore, had to attend the Wool Merchant's Guild where he studied medieval Latin, astronomy, geography, arithmetic, and navigation. His favorite reading was the Bible, which he read thoroughly, especially the Proverbs of Solomon.

In May 1476, at the age of 24, much to the disappointment of his parents, Columbus embarked as a sailor on a Genoese fleet headed for England. He had once before at the age of fourteen boarded a ship on a short voyage east, his first experience with what was to become his lifelong vocation.

5. Did Columbus reach England on this voyage?

No. On August 13, off the coast of Portugal, near Lagos, the convoy was suddenly attacked by a Franco-Portuguese war fleet. After an all day battle, seven ships of the convoy were sunk. Columbus leaped into the sea, seized a log, and swam over six miles to shore. From Lagos he headed for Lisbon where his younger brother Bartholomew had a map-making shop.

6. Why was this incident a turning-point in the life of young Columbus?

Columbus began to work with his brother Bartholomew making navigational maps. Map-making was important at this time because the late fifteenth and the sixteenth century was the Age of Exploration. In this field the one nation that outstripped all others was Portugal.

Under the patronage of Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460), whom Columbus admired, the Portuguese were seeking a route to the Indies by rounding the coast of Africa.

As a map-maker, Columbus and his brother interrogated every captain returning from a sea voyage in order to obtain every bit of information possible that would help them make more accurate maps.

For nine years Columbus studied everything in Lisbon that pertained to navigation. He even taught himself contemporary Latin so that he could read the scientific navigational books of the day.

7. What did Columbus do to further his studies?

Columbus enlisted in the Portuguese navy for two years.

8. What amazing discovery did Columbus make while in the Portuguese Navy?

Columbus had been studying the wind patterns of the Atlantic. From the Canary Islands off the northern coast of Africa, the winds blow from east to west. We call them the Trade Winds. In the days when one had only sail, the Portuguese mariners were afraid to sail out too far from the coast lest they might not be able to return. Hence, they hugged the coastlines of Africa seeking a route to India.

But when Columbus was in the north Atlantic, he discovered that the winds blew just as steadily as the Trade Winds but from west to east. We call them the prevailing Westerlies.

Columbus realized for the first time in history that one could sail west with the Trade Winds and return with the Westerlies. Both ways, one would have the wind at his back. **No other man of his time had thought of that.**²

On his first voyage, when he was 3000 miles out in the Atlantic, Columbus' crew was on the verge of mutiny because they did not know how they could return home. Columbus, however, knew because he had discovered the movement of the winds. "Modern racing yachtsmen agree that a sailing vessel today, after all that has been learned in the last five centuries, could not do better than follow Columbus' route."³

9. After Columbus left the Portuguese Navy, did he return to Genoa?

No. In fact he never returned to Genoa. He died in Valladolid, Spain. However, on his deathbed he did remember Genoa, his birthplace, in his will.

10. What did Columbus do after leaving the Portuguese Navy?

He returned to Lisbon in Portugal and continued his navigational studies. What many people do not know is that Columbus was a mariner without parallel in his own time and for all times. He traveled to Africa, Ireland, England, Iceland and Greece—all the while storing and broadening his knowledge so that one day he would achieve his ultimate goal: a western trade route to the Indies that would provide the necessary wealth to launch a crusade against the Moslems in order to recapture the Holy Land for the Church.

Also, upon his return to Lisbon, Columbus, at the age of 28, married Felipa Perestrello y Moniz, whose aristocratic mother was Portuguese and whose father was from an old aristocratic Italian family and Governor of Porto Santo. The Governor had maps, resources and navigational information that proved of incalculable help to Columbus.

From this marriage Columbus had one child, whom he named Diego after his brother. Unfortunately, Felipa died shortly after the birth of their son.

11. Did Columbus ever marry again?

There is no record of a second marriage. However, Columbus did live in a common-law relationship with Beatriz Enriquez de Harana, a commoner of a good family from Córdoba, Spain. In those days, marriage with a commoner was not permitted by civil law.

It is, therefore, possible that he did marry Beatriz canonically. He was certainly faithful to her all the days of his life. According to historians, he led a celibate life during all his voyages. It is significant that when he died, because of his well-known continence, he had escaped the scourge of syphilis, which had afflicted all of his crew and had ravaged all of Europe.

Moreover, Columbus showed affection for Beatriz' family, appointing her cousin Diego de Harana as commander of Fort Navidad in Hispaniola, which was constructed from the wreck of the **Santa Maria** on December 1492.

In 1488 Beatriz bore Columbus a son, whom he named Ferdinand after Queen Isabella's husband.

Because no marriage record has yet been found of the marriage, Ferdinand has been viewed as illegitimate, despite the fact that Columbus had legitimized him. The questions of no record and legitimacy halted the canonization process of Columbus that had begun in 1856 and continued to 1918. Church authorities are still searching for a marriage record.

In his will, Columbus provided for Beatriz, as his wife, and counseled both his sons to take good care of their mother.

12. Then is all this Columbus-bashing about his being promiscuous and immoral utterly false?

Absolutely! Columbus was not only moral, but a truly religious man: he read the Divine Office daily like a priest, he headed every letter with a little cross, he belonged to the Third Order of the Franciscans and went about garbed in the Franciscan robe whenever he could. His closest friends were ecclesiastics, especially the Franciscans of La Rábida monastery. When he traveled, he left his son Diego in the care of these monks. It was the prior of this monastery, Fray Antonio Marchena, together with Fray Juan Pérez once the confessor of Queen Isabella, who were responsible for obtaining an audience for Columbus with the Queen.

A sharp contrast can be seen between the religious fervor of Columbus and our astronauts. When our astronauts landed on the moon, the first thing they planted there was the American flag. When Columbus set foot on the first island in the new world, Guanahani, he planted there, not the flag of Spain, but the cross of Christ and changed the name of the island from Guanahani to San Salvador, Holy Savior, because he wished to acknowledge that the new world belonged first to God and then to Spain.

On the spot where Columbus first sighted land, to commemorate his triumphal landing, stands on that silent beach a white cross.

His religious conviction was shown in the names he gave to places in the new world: St. John the Baptist, Santa Cruz, St. Thomas, the Virgin Islands, St. Cristobal, St. Martin, St. Vincent, Dominica, All Saints, Navidad, and many others.

In fact so complete was Columbus' spiritual dedication to God that in 1498 what little gold Columbus did send back to Spain was not used for any monetary gain but to glorify God. Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand sent that gold to Rome, and it was used to gild the magnificent ceiling of the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.

13. Why did Columbus go to Queen Isabella for help and not to Portugal?

Columbus did turn to Portugal first, but King John and his advisors were not convinced of Columbus' enterprise. When they had turned him down, Columbus retreated as usual to the monastery of La Rábida in Spain. Both the prior of this monastery, Fray Antonio de Marchena, and

the former confessor of Queen Isabella, Fray Juan Pérez, believed in Columbus. It was they who persuaded Columbus not to give up hope.

Finally, in May 1486, almost a year from the time he had set foot in Spain, Columbus was received by the Queen in the Alcazar of Cordoba, thanks to his Franciscans friends.⁴

14. Did Queen Isabella immediately agree to sponsor Columbus?

No. In 1486 Spain was in the throes of a deadly conflict with the Moors. Queen Isabella was too preoccupied with this crusade to consider Columbus' request.

However, she was a great judge of people. Columbus impressed her deeply. Both were of the same age, they were much alike in physical appearance: each had red blond hair, blue-green eyes, both had extremely fair complexions. What impressed her most, however, was Columbus' navigational knowledge, his deep faith, and crusading spirit, much like her own. So Isabella offered Columbus the only thing which she could offer him at the time, namely, hope.⁵

15. For how long did Columbus have to hope?

He waited six long years before once again pleading his case before the Queen. This time he felt he would succeed, because on January 2, 1492, the last of the Moors had been driven out of Spain and the country was now a united kingdom.

Still, Queen Isabella turned him down. Disheartened, Columbus saddled his mule, packed the saddlebags with his charts and other exhibits, and started for Seville with his faithful friend, Fray Juan Pérez, intending to go to France and appeal to Charles VIII. Columbus would not give up.

However, on the same day he left, Luis Santangel, treasurer of the King, arrived at court and convinced Queen Isabella to subsidize Columbus' enterprise. Immediately, she dispatched a messenger who overtook Columbus at Santa Fe and brought him back to court. In this springtime of 1492, Queen Isabella commissioned the citizens of Palos, a seaport city of southern Spain, to outfit three vessels for Columbus.

16. Who financed the building of these ships?

A great part of the money came from the royal treasury, headed by Luis Santangel, whose uncle was the reigning Pope Innocent VIII; the other part came from Italian bankers in Spain and from Columbus himself.

17. Why didn't Columbus appeal for financial aid from Italy?

At that time, Italy was not a united nation. The unification of Italy was not completed until 1870.

18. What were the three ships built at Palos?

First, there was Columbus' flagship. His religious piety is manifest in the name he gave her: the **Santa Maria** after Holy Mary, the Mother of God. The Santa Maria, the largest of the three vessels, carried a crew of only 40.

The second ship was the **Pinta**, manned by a crew of 26; and the third ship was the sturdy **Nina**, with a crew of 24.

These three wooden ships were watch-charm vessels. None was any longer than the main aisle of a cathedral. The grand total of the crew manning these three vessels numbered 90 men.⁶

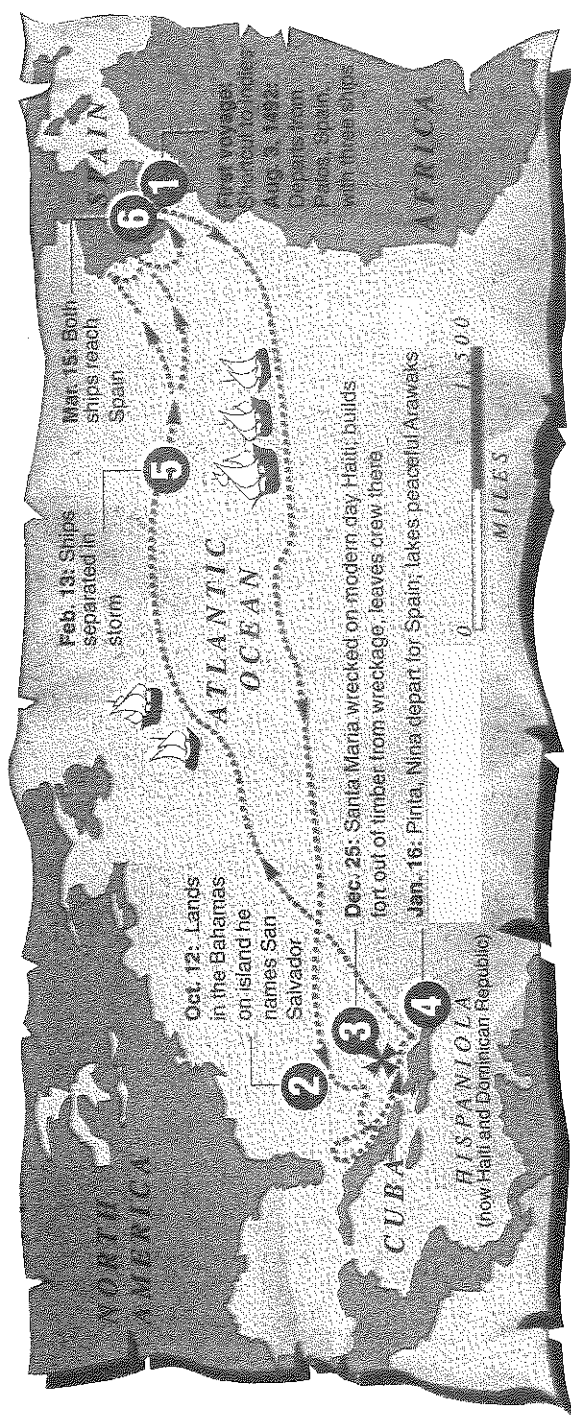
Regarding the crew three things stand out: their splendid families; their good health, not one man died at sea during the first voyage, an extraordinary record; their homogeneity — with the exception of four men, all were Spaniards, the pick of the seafaring population of Spain, experienced sailors all.

19. When did Columbus set sail from Palos?

The day Columbus selected for his voyage reflects his profound faith. August 2, 1492, was the feast of Our Lady of the Angels, patroness of La Rábida. Columbus scheduled his departure on the day following this feast because he wanted his men to join in the celebration of thanksgiving and prayer with their families and to go to confession and communion. On the next day, August 3, 1492, half an hour before sunrise, Columbus' ships set sail on one of the greatest voyages in the history of the world.⁷

20. Why did Columbus set sail from Palos instead of Cadiz, the usual port of embarkation?

The reason he did this was because August 3, 1492, was the last day the Jews were granted the option of either leaving Spain or of converting to the Catholic faith. Since thousands of Jews opted to leave Spain, the port of Cadiz teemed with vessels, making it almost impossible for Columbus to use this port for his departure.



SOURCE: Smithsonian Institution; "Seeds of Change," by Herman Viola and Carolyn Margolis; "People's History of the United States," by Howard Zinn; World Book Encyclopedia; Research by WENDY GOVIER

21. Did Columbus set sail directly from Palos to the New World?

No. He sailed from Palos to the Canary Islands because from there the Trade Winds begin. Within a week, they reached the Canary Islands. (These Islands were named for a special breed of dogs on the Islands, not for birds, as many believe. The Latin word for dog is *canis*; hence Canary Islands.) After having replenished their supplies and having made necessary repairs, the fleet set sail on its westward journey September 6.

22. What happened to Columbus and his crew after leaving the Canary Islands?

After leaving the Canary Islands, Columbus and his crew sailed thirty-six days due west, filled with every emotion: in the beginning of the voyage, they were filled with hope, expectation, happiness; but as week followed week, discouragement, fear, despair, even mutiny began to set in. Only Columbus' faith in his God-given destiny and in his navigational skills, prodded his men to sail on, to sail on, and on!

Columbus' courageous persistence paid off. On October 12, 1492, land was sighted. The land was one of the islands of the Lucayos, called by the Indian name of Guanahani. Columbus renamed the island San Salvador after the Holy Savior. Today it carries the name Watling Island.⁸

23. Did Columbus settle on San Salvador?

No. Columbus was not interested in colonization. His prime interest was in exploration. After San Salvador, Columbus went on exploring; and, by the end of October, he discovered Cuba. There, he saw the Indians smoking tobacco — a practice the sailors brought back to Europe.

He left Cuba to discover Haiti. At Haiti bad luck befell him and his crew. Due to the negligence of the lookout, while the rest of the crew was asleep, his flagship the **Santa Maria** hit a reef and went aground.

On this occasion he was helped by the gentle and beautiful Arawak natives in constructing Fort Navidad from the timbers of the ship.

24. Were all the other Indians gentle like the Arawaks?

Unfortunately not. This is the impression that is being given lately by the anti-Columbus faction and authors like Kirkpatrick Sale.⁹

That all Indians were gentle is totally untrue. The American Indian is the same as every other human being: some good and some bad, some beautiful and some ugly, some kind and some cruel.

25. Who were the other Indians that Columbus encountered?

After the gentle Arawaks with whom Columbus established friendly relations and who accompanied him on his explorations, he came into contact with the cannibalistic Caribs. The first Spanish-Indian war was with the Caribs on the island of St. Croix in 1493; and it is significant that the gentle Arawaks allied themselves with the Spaniards against the Caribs. The reason for this alliance was the cruelty and cannibalism of the Caribs. They would, as was customary, devour not only the Arawaks but also the Spaniards, when captured.

26. What in Mexico, for instance, is most impressive regarding the pre-Columbian culture?

What impresses the anthropologist and archaeologist most is the natural beauty of Mexico and the present-day Mexican who is proud to be a **mestizo**; that is, one who is part Indian and part European or other. The Mexican exudes a warmth and kindness without limit. The bi-cultural assimilation of the Indian since the colonization is most commendable; it is so unlike the Indian reservations of North America that serve to separate rather than integrate the Indian community. However, the most impressive fact is the advanced civilization of the Aztecs at that time.

27. Was the Aztec culture all positive?

The great flaw in the Aztec civilization was not only their hostility to the other Indians but their Satanic worship using human sacrifice.

Their law required a thousand human sacrifices each year to their serpent-god. Throughout the Aztec empire, it was common for them to sacrifice 50,000 Indians, often more, to their god in one year.

In other words, this hemisphere was not the paradise of Kirkpatrick Sale, who wrongly attributes all the ills of the Indians to the white man.

As a matter of fact, with the arrival of Columbus, these Satanic rites of the Aztecs to their serpent-god eventually came to an end.¹⁰

It is interesting when Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego outside Mexico City in 1531, she gave her name as "The One who crushes the serpent." In the Indian dialect, that name sounded like Guadalupe.

The Spaniards mistakenly thought she was referring to their great shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Spain.¹¹

28. Was the white man responsible for what is referred to as the annihilation of the Indian?

Certainly not! Much that is directed at Columbus and the white man is totally unfair, unjust, and unfounded.

In Mexico, for instance, within one century since the discovery of the New World, out of five million Mexicans only one million survived.

Historians attribute this to the cruelty of the Spaniards and the diseases brought by them from Europe, such as smallpox.

This is a most unjust accusation because disease was here long before Columbus arrived. In fact, all of the Haitians were afflicted with syphilis before a single white man ever touched the shores of the New World.¹²

In 1992, archaeologists unearthed the ruins of the Mogollon Indian civilization that existed on the border of New Mexico and Arizona a century before Columbus landed in the New World. Around 1400 this civilization mysteriously disappeared due to famine and disease.¹³

29. Was disease the sole factor in the annihilation of the Indians?

No! The brutality and cruelty of the colonists in the sixteenth century, long after the death of Columbus in 1506, were also responsible for the annihilation of the Indian.

30. But wasn't Columbus responsible for bringing blacks from Africa to be slaves in the New World?

Certainly not! A missionary priest, Bartolomé de las Casas, called the Apostle of the Indians, was responsible for the subsequent importation of black slaves from Africa. He suggested this because of his deep love for the Indians. He wished to spare them the hard labors which they could not endure because of their physical weaknesses resulting from syphilis and their lack of immunity to diseases.

All of this took place after the death of Columbus in 1506. Therefore, in no way can slavery be blamed on Columbus any more than the horrors of the slave exploitation following the invention of the cotton gin can be blamed on Eli Whitney.¹⁴

Furthermore, slaves were a part of the hierarchy of the Indians themselves, so slavery was not a new concept on this continent. Their

religious medicine men constituted the first hierarchy; the next was that of the nobles, followed by the farmers; and the last was that of the Indian prisoners of war, who were relegated to the position of slaves.¹⁵

31. What effect did the discovery of Columbus have on the monarchy of Spain?



After the wreck of his flagship, the **Santa Maria**, he returned to Spain in the sturdy **Nina**. On the route home, they hit a storm of hurricane proportions in the Atlantic, so that the **Nina** and **Pinta** became separated. Each captain thought that the other vessel had sunk, so terrible was the storm.

Providentially, both vessels survived; and on March 15, 1493, Columbus reached Palos, Spain, followed a day later by the **Pinta**.

All of Spain greeted the adventurers as heroes. Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand conferred upon Columbus the title of Admiral of the Ocean Sea and Viceroy of the Indies. Columbus became one of the greatest men in Spain overnight, and the news of his great discovery spread like wildfire throughout Europe, the Orient, and the Islamic world.

Columbus' discovery brought glory to Spain enabling it to become the greatest power in the Western world. Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand were so elated that they urged a second voyage. A fleet of seventeen ships was outfitted with about 1,500 men to colonize the new-found lands and with twelve priests to Christianize the Indians, which was the ultimate mission of Columbus, not gold.

This time, the second voyage of Columbus started from Cadiz, September 25, 1493. On November 3, Columbus reached the island of Hispaniola, known today as Haiti and the Dominican Republic. He established there the first European colony in America; and named the settlement Isabella after the Queen.

In the summer of 1494, Columbus explored southern Cuba and discovered Jamaica. In June 1496 he returned to Spain.

32. How long did Columbus remain in Spain before making his third voyage to the New World?

Columbus stayed in Spain about two years. On May 30, 1498, he left Spain for his third voyage. On July 31, he landed on an island which he called Trinidad after the most Holy Trinity. On August 5 he landed

on the coast of Venezuela. This incident is most important because it establishes the fact that Columbus did indeed set foot on the continent of the New World. While Columbus was away exploring the continent, the colonists of Hispaniola fought with the Indians and were responsible for the discontent in the new-found colonies.

This news reached the King and the Queen who sent Francisco de Bobadilla to investigate. Bobadilla was both ambitious and envious of Columbus. He did not give Columbus a hearing; instead, he sent him and his brothers back to Spain in chains.

33. What was the outcome of this injustice?

When Queen Isabella saw Columbus in chains, she wept and ordered them removed immediately. She listened to Columbus' defense and was so satisfied that she granted him a fourth voyage—his last and most adventurous one, for Columbus' purpose was to circumnavigate the globe. Unfortunately, he was shipwrecked on the island of Jamaica.

Again, envy and nationalism, Columbus being Italian, the Spanish governor of Hispaniola refused to help him for almost a year. The hardships Columbus endured at this time wrecked his health; so he returned to Spain without realizing the goal of his voyage. He arrived in Spain November 17, 1504, nine days before the death of Queen Isabella.

34. What happened to Columbus after Queen Isabella's death?

Columbus lost his champion. King Ferdinand would do nothing for Columbus. Within a year and a half after the death of Queen Isabella, Columbus died in a humble dwelling at Valladolid, Spain. He died a broken man with only his sons Diego and Ferdinand and his Captain Méndez and a few servants at his side. He died on the vigil of the feast of the Ascension May 20, 1506. His last words were those of Christ on the cross: "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." He was buried in Valladolid, Spain, in the robes of a Franciscan tertiary and with his chains, as he requested. His dying wish was that his remains be taken to Santo Domingo, which his grandson fulfilled years later.

35. Today, five hundred years after Columbus' death, why should there be any controversy as to his discovery of America?

Because the word **discovery** is not clearly understood, we have had and continue to have disputes as to who discovered America.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word **discover** is defined thus: "The finding out or bringing to light of that which was previously unknown; making known" (1553).

In other words, the word discover means "to make known what was previously unknown, to bring to light what was hidden." That is why all the claimants prior to Columbus who brought nothing to light, made nothing known of their voyages to the rest of the world at that time, cannot be called discoverers.

Only one person, and one person alone, can be recognized as the discoverer of America and that person is Christopher Columbus.

After each of his voyages, he not only returned to the court of Spain but he also brought evidence to substantiate his discovery; namely, six natives from the New World and, more precious than gold, exotic fruits and vegetables heretofore unknown in Europe. He made known to the old world the existence of a new world and that is what the word discover means.¹⁶

The fact that the land was inhabited does not negate the discovery of the New World, since discoveries throughout history were and are made of already inhabited lands. Should Ponce de Leon be discredited as the discoverer of Florida; Coronado and de Soto, the Colorado River; Jacques Cartier, the St. Lawrence; Samuel de Champlain, the Great Lakes; and David Livingstone, Victoria Falls — simply because they pre-existed their discovery?

There is no question that many explorers before Columbus claimed to have reached the new World.

Asians from Siberia, long before 12,000 B.C., crossed the Bering Strait and settled in the New World. They are our present-day Indians, who, as a matter of fact, are not indigenous; because the word "indigenous" means "native." The Indians did not originate in America, but had their origin in Asia. They are Asian-Americans.¹⁷

36. Who followed these Asians?

The Japanese, the Egyptians and the Africans claim to have touched the shores of the New World. Following is a list of other claimants:

In 449 B.C. Chinese claimed to have traveled 20,000 Chinese miles eastward.

In 500 B.C. Phoenicians and Celts from Portugal touched the New England coast.

In 531 B.C. Sidonians landed on the coast of Brazil.

In A.D. 64 the Romans.

In A.D. 692 St. Brendan from Ireland discovered the Isles of the Blest.

In A.D. 874 the Norwegians Eric the Red claimed Greenland and Bjarni Herjolfsson sighted the coast of Labrador.

In A.D. 1001 Leif Ericson discovered Vineland, Markland, and Helluland.

Around A.D. 1170 Prince Madoc of Wales reached the coast of Virginia.

In A.D. 1400 Niccolo and Antonio Zeno claimed to have come to the shores of the New World.

All of these claimants never returned to make their "voyages" known, nor does a single shred of documentation exist to prove that anyone of these claimants were ever here.¹⁸

No less a historian than the renowned authority on Columbus, Samuel Eliot Morison (1887-1976), recipient of two Pulitzer Prizes, the Bancroft Prize, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and many other honors, has drawn this astounding conclusion from his Columbian studies:

*The Northmen's discovery of Newfoundland almost five centuries before Columbus proved to be dead-end. Pre-Columbian Portuguese, Welsh, Irish, English...voyages to America are modern-made myths, phantoms which left not one footprint on the sands of time.*¹⁹

37. How should we celebrate the Quincentennial of Columbus' discovery of America?

In the first place, we ought to dispel all the misinformation that is aimed at sabotaging the proper celebration of the Quincentennial.

To no man in modern history does the world, as we know it, owe so great a debt as to Christopher Columbus, the greatest navigator-explorer in all history.

38. Besides dispelling misinformation, what else can we do?

We ought to emulate what was done in the United States in 1892 when the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America was celebrated.

39. How was the four-hundredth anniversary of Columbus' discovery celebrated in America?

In this celebration and, as always in the past, the American Indians participated and paid tribute to Columbus' discovery.

In 1892 Francis Bellamy of Rome, New York, composed the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States for that celebration.

President Benjamin Harrison declared October 12, the day Columbus discovered America, a legal holiday — Columbus Day.

Many Orders were founded, like the Knights of Columbus, in honor of Christopher Columbus.

Since no new documentary evidence has been unearthed in five hundred years regarding the life of Christopher Columbus and his discovery of America in 1492, our Quincentennial celebration should be as positive, as harmonious, as honest, and as glorious as was the celebration one hundred years ago.

40. Why is it so important to honor Columbus?

Our youths today need heroes as role models. Therefore we ought to perpetuate the image of Columbus that we have held for 499 years, honoring his memory as the discoverer of America, paying tribute to his great navigational skills as Admiral of the Ocean Sea, giving credit where credit is due, namely, to the man whose legacy was the christianizing of the people of the New World, the "beginning and the end of the undertaking"²⁰ which he brought to fruition as the Christ-bearer.

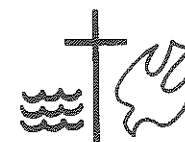
Our age today, more than ever, before needs men and women of principle driven by lofty ideals. Therefore, let us recall the ideals that spurred Columbus on: the dream of bearing Christ to others, of opening the doors of the New World for the expansion of all civilization.

The human race needs faith. Let us acknowledge, as we must if we be honest, that it was Columbus' profound faith that inspired the courage, the perseverance, the fearlessness that were so necessary to sail on, sail on and on into the vast unknown until he was able to plant the cross in a whole new world.²¹

The cross on Calvary was hope; the cross planted on San Salvador was opportunity. Were it not for the cross on Calvary, Columbus would never have sailed to discover a new world. Were it not for the second cross planted on San Salvador, people throughout the world would never have had a harbor to enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

We owe an undying debt of gratitude to Columbus for the legacy he has left us.

God bless America and may America bless God!



About the authors

Gilda Sposato Geiss is a scholar and teacher of foreign languages and English. She obtained her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Syracuse University and has also studied in Mexico, the Canary Islands, Florence, Italy, and Oxford University. Her studies and her travels to Germany, Denmark, France, Morocco, Puerto Rico and Spain led her on a journey that followed, at times, in the footsteps of Columbus.

Since two of her foreign languages are Italian and Spanish, the teaching of Columbus in the United States and Panama was part of the curriculum. This teaching extended over a quarter of a century and developed in her an intense interest in the life and deeds of Columbus.

Furthermore, her devotion to Columbus has been a personal and lifelong commitment, being the daughter of a Genoese mother, albeit Gilda was born in Calabria, and of a father, the late Joseph Sposato, who during his tenure as Italian Consul, spearheaded the erection of the Columbus Monument in Syracuse, New York.

Diane Concetta Bonacci graduated from CCBI in Syracuse and attended the University of Arizona and Syracuse University. She has authored *Heritage Remembered: A Family History*. She together with Gilda Geiss co-founded Advocates for Columbus, an organization whose purpose is to preserve and perpetuate the world image of Columbus which has been acknowledged by all scholars for the past 499 years.

Diane's career in the Federal Government encompassed various agencies. She has spent many years as an activist for numerous social and political causes.

The Reverend Albert Joseph Mary Shamon is pastor, columnist, author, teacher, and radio broadcaster. He was Vicar of Education of the Diocese of Rochester under Abp. Fulton J. Sheen. He obtained his Master's degree in History from Canisius College, Buffalo, New York. He pursued his sabbatical studies at Louvain University, Belgium, in 1983.

Among the several books he has written, the most popular are *Love People*, *The Power of the Rosary*, *Apocalypse*, and the *Our Lady Says* Series on Prayer, Mass, Confession, the Creed and the Sacramentals, published by the Riehle Foundation, P.O. Box 7, Milford, Ohio 45150.

Footnotes

1. Morison, Samuel Eliot. *Christopher Columbus, Mariner* (N.Y.: Mentor Books, 1942), pp.10,64.
2. Carroll, Warren H. "The Historical Truth about Christopher Columbus," *Fidelity*, April 1992, p.25.
3. Boorstin, Daniel J. *The Discoverers* (N.Y.: Random House, 1985), p.233.
4. Carroll, Warren H. *Isabel of Spain: the Catholic Queen* (VA: Christendom Press, 1991), p.169.
5. Morison, Samuel Eliot. *Christopher Columbus the Voyage of Discovery 1492* (CT.: Dorset Press, 1991), pp.36-37.
6. Morison. *Christopher Columbus Mariner*, pp.30-31.
Carroll. Idem, p.214.
7. Morison. Idem, p.32.
Carroll. Idem, p.215.
8. Catholic Traveler. "Columbus Island," Winter 1962, pp.4-5.
9. Sale, Kirkpatrick. *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy* (N.Y.: Knopf, 1990).
M.C.Burns. "Some Churches Apologize for Columbus,"
Syracuse Herald-Journal, January 11, 1992.
10. Carroll. "The Historical Truth about Christopher Columbus," p.28.
Carroll, Warren H. *Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Conquest of Darkness*. (VA: Christendom Press, 1983) pp.1-31.
11. Guadalupe, *The Immaculate Magazine*, pp.2,7.
The oppression of the Aztecs occurred long after the death of Columbus. On December 12, 1517, the Emperor Charles V appointed Nuno de Guzman, an unmitigated scoundrel, as governor of Mexico. It was this man, more than any other, who was responsible for the exploitation and persecution of the Indians. Within the first year of his governorship, he enslaved over ten thousand Aztecs and conscripted another ten thousand to forced labor.
The apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Tepeyac Hill Dec. 9, 1531, put an end to this reign of terror. From 1532 to 1548 over nine million Aztecs were converted to the Catholic faith.
In 1536 Nuno de Guzman was brought to justice.
Carroll. Idem, pp. 90-110.

12. Morison. Idem, p. 65.
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13. Los Angeles Times, "The Catacombs of Arizona," Post Standard, February 5, 1992.
14. Taviani, Paolo Emilio. *Columbus the Great Adventure: His Life, His Times, and His Voyages*. (N.Y.: Crown, 1991).
15. Carroll. "The Historical Truth about Christopher Columbus," p.33.
16. Carroll. Idem, p. 24.
Harper, Rev. Howard. "Legacy of Columbus," Syracuse Herald-Journal, October 10, 1971.
17. The first men to discover the New World or Western Hemisphere are believed to have walked across a "land bridge" from Siberia to Alaska, an isthmus since broken by the Bering Strait. From Alaska, these ancestors of the Indians spread through North, Central, and South America. Anthropologists have placed these crossings at between 18,000 and 14,000 B.C.; but evidence found in 1967 near Puebla, Mex., indicates mankind reached there as early as 35,000-40,000 years ago.
At first, these people were hunters using flint weapons and tools. In Mexico, about 7000-6000 B.C. they founded farming cultures, developing corn, squash, etc. Eventually, they created complex civilizations—Olmec, Toltec, Aztec, and Maya and, in South America, Inca.
The World Almanac – 1986, p. 523
18. Nevins, Albert J. *Our American Catholic Heritage* (Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1972), p. 18
19. Morison, Samuel Eliot. *Christopher Columbus the Voyage of Discovery 1492*, p. 12
20. Fuson, Robert H. (translator). *The Log of Christopher Columbus* (Maine: International Marine Pbl., 1987), p. 120
21. Columbia. Dechant, Virgil C. "Columbus: Man of Faith and Commitment," November, 1983, pp. 4-5.
Columbia, April 1992.